

State of the City Address

Mayor Dan Snarr

January 20, 2009

Council Members, residents, City staff, thank you for giving me a few moments tonight to talk about something we all know - "There's More to Murray." This past year has been a year of great accomplishments and progress. While 2009 may hold a different set of challenges, we are prepared to handle what comes our way.

Do you remember the last time you were caught in a storm without an umbrella or hat? Before you knew it, the water was running down your neck and back and you were looking for a safe haven out of the rain. Isn't it amazing what a difference it makes to tuck your umbrella or hat in your car, even on a day that doesn't start out gray? The value of being prepared helps us maintain our positive attitudes when the storm hits. What does this have to do with the State of our City? During the last year, we kept our umbrella close at hand. Our preparedness allowed us to enjoy the rain because planning has made it possible to maintain quality services and support for our citizens.

I'd like to take you on a visual tour of our City and show you some of the accomplishments of the last year. I invited our citizens to join me on a bus tour to have them see the City from a different perspective. Over 50 residents joined me and each left with a new appreciation for the services they count upon each day. Along that same line, to be prepared for the next few years, as well as to work in the direction our residents would like us to go, I commissioned a survey in October. It was a telephone survey of 400 residents, administered by Dan Jones and Associates. I would like to share some of the responses from the survey with you throughout my presentation tonight.

The employees in our City are a key factor in how prepared we are to address issues. They are knowledgeable and available to respond to a variety of circumstances. We have had some changes in key positions due to retirements and for other reasons. I would like to begin by mentioning some of these individuals.

Our Finance Department is in the capable hands of Patricia Wilson. She is joined in this photo by new employees Rachel Jackson, Payroll Coordinator and Tom Steffey, Accounting Technician. Pat has worked hard this year on processes to improve transparency and use of available computer technology. She is simplifying budget forms to make the process more streamlined. 92% of residents were satisfied to very satisfied with the Utility Billing that Finance oversees.

With the retirement of the Human Resource Director, Mike Terry has taken the reins of this department. Mike has been busy training his replacement, Robyn Colton, and disbanding two boards - the Disability Advisory and the Civil Service Commission. With the help of the Attorney's Office, we now have new Public Safety Rules and Regulations in place along with a smaller three member Personnel Advisory Board.

We have welcomed a new Municipal Justice Court Judge, Judge Paul Thompson. Judge Thompson, working with Mike Williams, our Court Administrator, has made huge strides in case flow management while reducing an existing case backlog. They work with our terrific City Prosecutors to provide smooth and timely case management.

A new department has been created in the City, titled the Department of Community and Economic Development. This department combined a department and division and is now directed by Tim Tingey. Tim has brought great energy and ability to these areas. He is pictured by Planner Chad Wilkinson and Jennifer Heaps, Office Specialist, who joined his staff in the reorganization. This department has responsibility for Economic Development, the Redevelopment Agency, Community Development Block Grant funding, and Zoning Enforcement.

Economic Development continues to be a key in our community as you can see with the new Sunflower Market and the expansion of the Fashion Place Mall. The new Nordstrom Department Store will be completed this spring and bring a new face to the Mall. As part of the survey, we asked about making improvements to our Historic Downtown. 78% of the respondents feel this area should be recreated to focus on housing, shopping and government offices. A Downtown Master Plan is in preliminary stages to provide direction to bring this area back to life. Although the economy is struggling right now, it is a great time to prepare for the future. I am looking forward to pursuing this plan and gathering input from our residents in the coming year.

Fireclay continues to be reinvented and new projects are being planned. A bridge crossing 4500 South will add another access to this area as part of the Blackridge development, projected to begin this spring. This is a great Transit Oriented Development area and project that received favorable responses from 85% of those contacted. A Housing Study is also underway to determine the best way to utilize local Community Development Block Grant funding to benefit the most residents.

Another noticeable improvement will come on the property owned by the Intermountain Medical Center on State Street. This property has been in litigation for almost 10 years and it will be a positive change in the landscape below the beautiful hospital.

Murray City Library received a facelift during the last year. The Library was renovated to add more computer space and update paint, carpeting and fixtures. The construction was completed with only minor disruption to service and has already motivated more use. Circulation increased this year by over 11%. People love this library and give it 78% high approval ratings in the survey results.

81% of residents are very satisfied with the service provided by Murray City Power. They appreciate the great reliability and the fast responses to outages. The upgrade of our power system grid to 138 kv was completed this year. Moving ahead with these projects in good fiscal years has allowed us to be prepared to handle future needs. We have also been a leader in green facilities with two landfill gas projects in our renewable portfolio. The TransJordan project will come on line very soon. A new agreement through the Utah Association of Municipal Power Systems will allow us to resell some of our Intermountain Power Project energy to other members. This will bring funds to help us plan for resources to meet future demands.

One way we want to improve as City leaders is to communicate more effectively with our residents. About 69% of those surveyed felt our website was good. We hope that number will improve as they view our **new** website. Our MIS Department, working with CivicPlus, helped direct the construction of the new site. Our Information Systems department provided many software upgrades and training classes to help us improve the productivity of our staff. They also worked to install a new Interactive Voice Response system to allow on-line payments for our Court.

Our City engineers and street division accomplished many projects. They coordinated efforts with UTA to realign Cottonwood Street as part of the Mid-Jordan light rail spur project. UDOT helped fund the enhancement project on 5300 South and I-15 and it was coordinated by our staff. Our seasonal weed sprayer made great progress keeping the weeds down in some of the more troublesome areas around town. Eight local road projects were completed. Snow is being plowed by our drivers who are working hard to make the streets safe in bad weather. In the survey, road maintenance, traffic and sidewalk repairs were mentioned as concerns.

The water division laid 5200 feet of 8 inch water main upgrading and improving the system. The quality of our water was rated very good by 84% of those taking the survey. A new well house was completed and the well rehabilitated on Vine Street. We have accomplished numerous projects in both our Waste Water and Storm Water divisions, preparing us with improved infrastructure.

The Park Center boilers have been replaced to heat the water in the pools and warm other areas of the facility. Murray Parks and Recreation operates 105 sport and recreation programs - more than any organization in the State of Utah. We have a wonderful staff that makes it all happen. Parks and park services were rated second highest in the survey behind public safety.

The Ken Price Ballpark hillside was re-landscaped in preparation to host the Babe Ruth World Series in August of this year. Work also continued to remove non-native trees and vegetation along the Jordan River Parkway. Arborists worked with Park personnel to make more progress in this ongoing effort.

Intermountain Medical Center celebrated their first year in operation by completing the Chimney Garden. Plaques now memorialize the smelter industry that once drove the economy in Murray.

The Heritage Center is popular with those age 55 and older. In the survey, those who take advantage of this facility, give it high marks. Half of those responding did not know about the Center - they must be the younger crowd. 98 volunteers provided over 6,100 hours of service to the Center this year.

Murray Parkway Golf Course continues to be a great showcase for golf in the Valley, with over 80% of the respondents to the survey being satisfied with it. The Course was recognized in Golf Digest as one of the "Best Places to Play" compared with golf courses around the country.

Our Treasurer helped us organize a city "Utility Relief Program" to help those with very low income. It is in the third year and has successfully stretched a small amount of funding to help many in need.

A new Utah Public Meeting Notice Website was launched this year. Our City Recorder's Office has been instrumental in training all departments to keep our City information added to the site and current. New software and processes have been put in place to improve our business license coordination throughout the City.

Our Attorney's Office provides outstanding support and gate keeping on all the projects requiring legal oversight. Agreements, ordinances, resolutions, code adjustments, claims management and technical expertise are just some of the ways they serve our City. Our City Prosecutors provide service on hundreds of cases each year in our Justice Court and are exceptional in the work they accomplish.

Murray City was honored this year to be the hometown of David Archuleta. His talent is amazing and we all enjoyed the celebration of his success as an American Idol finalist. I called to vote along with all of you. I have no doubt he will be remembered as one of Murray City's favorite sons.

Finally, I would like to mention the success of our public safety departments this year. In the Police Department, the crime lab is fully operational. The evidence room is being remodeled with expanded shelving that will handle a greater volume of material in a more effective way. Over 84% of those surveyed appreciated the quick response times of our Police Department and their efforts at traffic enforcement.

This year will bring the effort to restructure our Fire Department to a conclusion. The responses to our fire and medical services ranked at the top of those mentioned in the survey. Station 82 has been completed and is aiding in quicker responses in the east side of our City. The station at 163 E. and 5900 South is now the home of the City ambulances. This service was brought in house on January 1st to allow us to provide a higher level of trained emergency care and to eliminate duplicating hospital runs. A new ladder truck has been ordered and will be ready in March. Finally, Station 83, currently located on Bullion Street, will be opened on the new site on 5900 South and 550 West. This station will be completed this spring and comes with an additional feature of an Emergency Operation Center. We currently have an EOC that must be assembled each time it is used. This new one will be constantly in place and ready for training or use in emergencies.

One of my initiatives for 2009 is to help our City move to new heights in preparation. The new EOC is a catalyst to showcase the efforts we can make this year. I intend to improve and update the training of all our City staff, so they can be available to continue to help our residents in a time of emergency. I will also provide information to our residents to help everyone focus on what they can do to prepare for emergencies. As I mentioned at the beginning, if we are prepared, the rain can fall and we will be dry.

The most outstanding question in the survey came with amazing results - 96% of our residents told us that Murray City is a good place to live. My goal is to continue, with all of you, to prepare today to make it better for tomorrow.